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# Indivisible and Inseparable: The Austro-Hungarian Army and the Question of Decline and Fall

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**CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE**  
**INDIVISIBLE AND INSEPARABLE:**  
**THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN ARMY AND**  
**THE QUESTION OF DECLINE AND FALL**

**SUBMITTED TO**  
**PROFESSOR HEATHER FERGUSON**

**AND**  
**DEAN GREGORY HESS**

**BY**  
**KYLE D. WOODS**

**FOR**  
**SENIOR THESIS**  
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### **Abstract**

The title of this work is “Indivisible and Inseparable” the motto of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This motto is just one of many ways in the Austro-Hungarian Empire fought against the centrifugal forces seeking to destroy it. I argue here that the historic theory of decline and fall is misguided as a model for understanding the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and question its usefulness when applied to other nation states and empires as well. I suggest that the Austro-Hungarian military, specifically its condition prior to the First World War, is an ideal lens for exploring the dissolution of the Empire at the end of the war in 1918. The Austro-Hungarian military was composed of over 10 different nationalities at a time of surging nationalism, and was the single most important institution charged with the preservation of the Empire. This unique linkage with the state of the Empire as a whole renders the military, in particular the Common Army, extremely useful for examining this issue. I will discuss the structure of the military, its response to the problems posed by nationalism, and contemporary public views about the military within the Empire.

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## **Imperial Dissolution: Predestined or Manufactured?**

The dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918 forever impacted the politics of Central and Eastern Europe. The term “balkanization” derives from this fracturing of a single political entity into a crowd of nation states.<sup>1</sup> At a very basic level the monarchy ended with the removal of the emperor Karl from politics in the fall of 1918, and the subsequent declarations of independence by various nationalities across the “ancient” empire.<sup>2</sup> The context surrounding its dissolution reveals how important the military was to the dual monarchy, in that a catastrophic military defeat ended a regime that had lasted for hundreds of years.

“Decline and fall” historiographic narratives have long dominated assessments of the collapse of empires and the rise of nation-states. This thesis stipulates that empires reach a relative peak of historical strength at one “golden” moment in their history, and then go through a (often sustained) period of decline. This period of decline ends in their fall, which typically manifests as a political end of the entity that existed before. While the theory has recently faced more critical examination with regard to empires such as the Roman, Ottoman, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian, it continues to pervade both scholarly and popular literature as a legitimate and viable mechanism for understanding the end of early modern territorial empires. Decline in part persists due to the simple nature of its model. It is very easy to conceptualize, and therefore creates a false sense of

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<sup>1</sup> See Visual Archive for map of Austria-Hungary.

<sup>2</sup> Robert A. Kann and Béla K. Király, *The Habsburg Empire in World War I: Essays on the Intellectual, Military, Political and Economic Aspects of the Habsburg War Effort* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1977), 75.

Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf called the Austro-Hungarian Empire ancient at the beginning of the First World War, he also referred to the Common Army as ancient.

understanding regarding the history of these complex states. One recent alternative to decline asserts that a wave analogy might be more accurate way of assessing imperial trajectories. In wave theory at the most basic level states would go through several periods of rising and declining relative strength during their existence. Additionally at the eventual collapse, it might be more accurate to argue that states transition into future entities as opposed to a total rupture assumed by the definitive term “fall,” which doesn’t capture the shifting geopolitical landscapes as empires end.<sup>3</sup> If the Habsburg Empire was destined to fail, and to collapse, then the military would have had to show signs of this leading up to its last war. The military then represents an effective lens when examining the accuracy of the theory of decline when imposed upon the last years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The aim of this study is to take seriously one institution that already contains within it a direct link to the health of the Empire as a whole. If, then, this close internal analysis demonstrates that decline is a simplistic and even misleading framework for assessing the last years of the Empire, than both the theoretical commitment to decline narratives and a closer attention to the splintering effect of nationalist groups supported by foreign governments and seeking to dismember the central power would emerge as a more useful axis of analysis.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The debate over decline and fall is common to discussions about many empires. The most notable is the Roman Empire, where historians to this day debate the cause for the end of the empire, with some such as Peter Heather (*The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians*) claiming that it was doing just fine until hordes of barbarians breached its frontier in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>4</sup> Later chapters here will discuss the varying nationalist movements that competed for autonomy within the Empire, and their strength. Undoubtedly the self determination propagated by Woodrow Wilson in his 14 points impacted the support for these movements, and the desire of nations like Italy to see the empire dismantled affected the outcome at the end of the First World War.

Austria-Hungary was not alone in facing internal strife in the years before the war. Nations throughout Europe faced conflicting agendas among nationalities, and sought conflict against an external force to unite the differing groups within the Empire. The Russian Empire was faced with splintering political and national factions, and the Tsar sought to take on the role of the protector of Slavs to calm the pan-Slavic sentiments within his own borders. The Ottoman Empire was faced with an emerging Turkish nationalist movement in the young Turks, and continued to lose pieces of its remaining European territory in the Balkan wars against the emerging Balkan nation states. The United Kingdom dealt with Irish independence movements that gained more steam every year. The Austro-Hungarian Empire confronted rising nationalism with its own unique past. The last wars fought by the Dual Monarchy were the German Unification wars, including the war with Prussia against Denmark and shortly afterwards the Austro-Prussian war of 1866 which established once and for all that Prussia had surpassed Austria as the preeminent central European Power.<sup>5</sup> The brief war of 1866 saw the Austrian Empire defeated in short order within its own territory by the superior Prussian force.<sup>6</sup> The 1866 conflict brought internal strife, particularly surging Hungarian nationalism, which had only been partially dealt with in the revolution of 1848, to a head in Austria. The *Ausgleich* of 1867, also known as the compromise of 1867, changed many domestic policies within the empire, but the most notable was the autonomy it gave

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<sup>5</sup> Although Austria and the new German Empire would soon become close allies, the two had been competing for control of the German speaking world since the rise of Frederick the Great to the throne of Prussia in 1740. This ended over 120 years of posturing and competition with the first armed conflict the two had engaged in since the Seven Years' War (commonly known in the United States as the French and Indian War) between 1754-1763.

<sup>6</sup> This conflict had essentially one decisive battle on terrain that is now part of the Czech Republic, known as the battle of Königgratz. The Austrians largely were defeated due to inferior training and weaponry. The Prussian breach loading needle gun proved superior to Austrian muzzle loaded weaponry.



Hungary. Hungary received equal autonomy with Austria, and was granted its own parliament and ministry, a major success for the Magyar nationalists.<sup>7</sup> The oldest members of the service, including the chief of the general staff, were commissioned into the service around the time of the German unification in 1870, leaving little to no combat experience in the ranks of the military.<sup>8</sup>

Proper comprehension of the terminology used to describe the various organizations and ideologies involved with the Austro-Hungarian military in the years leading up to the First World War is a necessary prerequisite to any conversation regarding the effectiveness of the decline theory when applied to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. These specific terms and definitions include both words used by contemporary sources and the analytic vocabulary assumed in secondary sources. Names and terms are used with different connotations at different points in history, and clarification will be provided here when a term carried a different connotation in its past iterations. The organizations or groups described here, including the Empire, various separatist groups, and the military all used distinct terms for very specific reasons, and the words that they used carry great importance. Additionally an understanding of the complexities of the terms is necessary to clearly assess the various forces at work and avoid simplifications such as collapsing “nation” and “country” without analyzing the ways in which national identity was constructed. Thus, when I use the term “nation” here I mean to reference a collective group of people, united by either culture, religion, or more prominently in the

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<sup>7</sup> The term Magyarists will be discussed in depth here, but Magyarists will typically refer to Hungarian Nationalists( Magyar is Hungarian for Hungary)

<sup>8</sup> Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, chief of the general staff( 1906-1916 with a short break before the First Balkan War) was commissioned into the infantry in 1871, the same year as the founding of the German Reich following the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. Interestingly enough France faced disastrous internal strife following its defeat at the hands of the Prussians, just as Austria did in 1866, only much bloodier.

case of the Habsburg Empire the factors of language and ethnicity.<sup>9</sup> The name “The Habsburgs” will be used exclusively for the dynastic members of the Habsburg line, I will not use it as a broad term relating to civil servants, or military officers and soldiers sworn to defend the line, although “the Habsburg state” will be used frequently as a synonym of “The Austro-Hungarian Empire” or as a reference to the historical state controlled by the Habsburgs with its various names.<sup>10</sup> Next, one must grapple with the difficulty of understanding which terms to use when discussing the military itself. The armed forces that defended the Habsburg dynasty were primarily organized into three distinct entities. The largest, and the dominant, force was the *Kaiserlich und Königlich* Common Army.<sup>11</sup> This army was composed of conscripts from all corners of the realm, both from the Austrian Empire and the Hungarian Kingdom. The Austrian Empire and the Hungarian Kingdom were the two halves of the Habsburg Dual-Monarchy. The leader of the House of Habsburg (which did not have to be a male) was crowned as the emperor or empress of Austria, and the king or queen of Hungary. Between the years of 1803 and 1867 the empire was simply known as the Austrian Empire, but as already referenced previously, a compromise with Hungarian nationalists, referred to here as Magyarists, in 1867 resulted in the creation of two separate administrative units.<sup>12</sup> The half headquartered in Vienna retained the moniker the Austrian Empire, while the new Kingdom of Hungary was led from Budapest and directed from the parliament there. The

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<sup>9</sup> Robert A. Kann, *The Multinational Empire; Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848-1918*. (New York: Octagon Books, 1964), 65.

<sup>10</sup> The Habsburgs were first Emperors of the Holy Roman Empire (until its dissolution in 1805 when Napoleon defeated it) and then between 1805-1867 the empire was known as the Austrian Empire, and following the *Ausgleich* or compromise of 1867 the empire became known as the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

<sup>11</sup> Robert A. Kann and Béla K. Király, *The Habsburg Empire in World War*, 73.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, Alan J. P. *The Habsburg Monarchy: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*. [Harmondsworth]: Penguin, 1967, 142-144.

Emperor kept Vienna as the capital of the combined monarchy, and institutions that were joint ventures between the two halves became known as *Kaiserlich* or Imperial, and *Königlich* , or Royal. The common shorthand for this became *k.u.k.*<sup>13</sup> Each of the two halves had their own military force designated as second line units until 1912, and acting as reserve caliber forces that were not as well trained or equipped as their Common Army counter parts.<sup>14</sup> The Austrian force was known as the *Landwehr* and the Hungarian the *Honvéd*. These forces had similar compositions, but both lacked the heavier equipment and support units found in the Common Army.

The army represents the best possible lens for examining the fate of Austro-Hungarian Empire for several reasons. The fate of the dynasty rested in the hands of the military in the First World War, but that is not the sole reason that makes the armed forces the most compelling facet of the empire when assessing the theoretical validity of decline and fall narratives. There were other organizations that were as, or nearly as, ubiquitous in the empire, yet they each fail to represent the Habsburg lands with the same efficiency as the military. Foremost among the cast of alternatives are the church and the bureaucracy. One could assume, due to the uniform training and purpose that the Catholic Clergy possessed, and due to the past religious persecution of all non-catholic Christians in Habsburg lands, that the Church would prove a useful or interesting lens to examine theories of decline and fall in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>15</sup> And yet, the Church falls short in this regard for several reasons: first, the nationality of the priest did indeed affect

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<sup>13</sup>Robert A. Kann and Béla K. Király, *The Habsburg Empire in World War I* ,70-80.

<sup>14</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918*(New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 35.

<sup>15</sup> Steed, Henry Wickham. *The Hapsburg Monarchy*. New York: H. Fertig, 1969, 42.

his leanings at the turn of the twentieth century. Priests in nearly all combatant nations prior to World War One advocated for the engagement of hostilities, but rarely for a common purpose.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, while the members of the Habsburg dynasty were staunch Roman Catholics they did not enact policy through the Catholic Church, and were members more than leaders within it. Thus, Emperor Franz Josef could not make decrees to members of the clergy about how to handle their ecclesiastic affairs and so the unique linkage between empire and military cannot be reproduced here.

This can also be said for the bureaucratic system as a whole. The political administrations governing the two halves of his empire had absolute control over their bureaucrats. The two bureaucracies were the result of the 1867 compromise, and the two administrations often had distinct agendas. Administrative control of the various civil servants caused an issue, for the agendas of the Hungarians and the Austrians were often at odds with one another.<sup>17</sup> The result of this is that when Magyarists were put in place in the Kingdom of Hungary they enacted on the most basic level pro-Magyar policies, and extended the use of the Magyar language which conflicted directly with bureaucrats in the Austrian Empire who relied on the local language German, but who were also trained in a wide variety of languages. The Austrian half of the empire proved much more sophisticated and accommodating in its use of languages when compared to the Hungarian half.<sup>18</sup> The nationalist push in Hungary to create a kingdom that was linguistically, if not ethnically, homogenous was the complete opposite of the policy of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>17</sup> Arthur James May, *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy, 1914-1918*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), 237.

<sup>18</sup> Taylor, Alan J. P. *The Habsburg Monarchy*, 245.

the Austrian empire which had long since abandoned any notion of extending the use of German as a language, or propagating Austro-German culture, and had adopted sweeping reforms.<sup>19</sup> These reforms included the legislating of which languages were used in classrooms. In villages throughout the empire, when a minority reached a certain percentage of the population they were afforded the opportunity to be educated in their mother tongue.<sup>20</sup> Additionally the bureaucracy was not staffed in the representative way that the Common Army was. The Common Army at this time had adopted a system of conscription that drafted personnel in a representative manner.<sup>21</sup> The ethnic percentages that composed the military mirrored the percentage of each ethnicity in the general population of the empire. This cross section allowed for an intimacy between ethnicities, and worked as an excellent showcase of how the ethnicities interacted with Habsburg authority, and each other, on a smaller scale.

European militaries at the turn of the century also acted as barometers for the relative strength of states. Arms races and naval rivalries were heating up all across Europe in the years before the First World War, and as such, empires would often look to their armies as ways of strengthening their status. The Germans were renowned for their military prowess, owing to their Prussian heritage. The Russians were feared for the sheer mass of numbers that they could deploy during combat. Austria-Hungary dedicated itself to creating a modern military it could be proud of, although it spent a smaller portion of its budget on its military than the other large powers in Europe.<sup>22</sup> Military officers had the

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<sup>19</sup> May, Arthur J. *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy: 1914 – 1918*, 245.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 191.

<sup>21</sup> Robert A. Kann and Béla K. Király, *The Habsburg Empire in World War I*, 84.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 77.

ear of the emperor, Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf who was the *de facto* commander in chief of the armed forces, and who was known to be one of the most important advisors to the emperor.<sup>23</sup> The Emperor himself wore military style uniforms at all public appearances and rarely wore anything else, and all male members of the Habsburg line were expected to serve in the armed forces at some point. Clearly the military was considered vital to the state, and stands as the best lens for the examination of the status of the empire prior to the outbreak of World War One.

The Habsburg Empire faced many nationalist movements and problems, including but not limited to: Pan-Slavism championed by upstart Serbia to its south; Magyarism supported by one of its own governmental arms; Czech and Slovak nationalism movements to the north of Vienna; Polish, Ukrainian, and Italian separatist sentiments on the edges of its empire.<sup>24</sup> Franz Josef also had to deal with the issue of a variety of languages in his lands, and creating a unified fighting force that could communicate with itself on a basic level was no easy task.<sup>25</sup> The military's structure was the result of strategies implemented by the General Staff and the Kaiser to negate these problems, and create a unified armed force, and in so doing work towards greater unification of the empire as a whole. The structure and composition of the military also reflects the efforts by imperial leadership to modernize the force. The goals and results of their attempts to modernize constitute the basis of most arguments for decline. Yet, if the empire was able to manufacture new weaponry, and create new training regimens for the military, it is unlikely that it was in a perpetual state of decline. Examination of the popularity of the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid,92.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Wickham Steed, *The Hapsburg Monarchy*. (New York: H. Fertig, 1969),301.

<sup>25</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*,134.

military among the civilian populace, and among officials in the government will allow us to approach the issue of decline from a different perspective. Because many of these nationalist movements in various corners of the empire were populist movements, the popularity of the force directly opposed to them is highly relevant. The monarch, Franz Josef, was respected and admired throughout the empire, even by secessionist groups, and his paternal feelings toward the military undoubtedly translated into wider public support for the boys in the trenches during the war.<sup>26</sup>

Undoubtedly, the Austro-Hungarian Empire felt itself to be in a precarious position leading up to the Great War.<sup>27</sup> This feeling was shared throughout imperial Europe, as monarchs became anxious not only due to unrest at home, but also because of what they feared their fellow monarchs would do with their swelling armies and navies. The question of whether or not Austria-Hungary existed in a perpetual state of decline and that its imminent dissolution was inevitable is best examined through the perspective of its military leading up to the First World War. If decline obscures the historical realities and institutional ingenuity of Austria-Hungary, then the dissolution of this “ancient” empire was not the result of a predestined path for the empire, but rather part of a new dynamic of inter-state competition that marked the end of heterogeneous territorial empires at the conclusion of WWI.

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<sup>26</sup> Arthur James May, *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy, 1914-1918*, 430.

<sup>27</sup> Robert A. Kann and Béla K. Király, *The Habsburg Empire in World War I*, 87.

More specifically, the general staff were extremely nervous about the possibility of engaging in any conflict involving Russia. Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf was extremely aggressive in seeking a preemptive war against Italy, and also of putting an end to the Serbian problem, but no one in the top cadre of military officials believed a war against the Russian Empire winnable.

### **The Composition of the Austro-Hungarian Ground Forces**

The Austro-Hungarian military of pre World War 1 was an entity created from the empire that it defended and thus uniquely representative of its key dynamics. The ground forces were divided into three general organizations that were largely independent of one another. The first group was the K.u.K Common Army, the main fighting force assembled from conscripted soldiers from all corners of the empire, with representation from 12 separate nationalities. The Austrian portion of the empire also had its force known as the *Landwehr*, a militia force derived solely from the provinces under the administration of the Austrian parliament in Vienna. The Kingdom of Hungary also had its own militia force known as the *Honvéd*. The double monarchy however had ultimate control of all military forces of both governments.

The Common Army was broken down into a variety of units. It was composed of 102 Infantry Regiments, 42 Cavalry Regiments, 56 Field Artillery regiments, 6 fortress artillery regiments, 3 fortress artillery battalions, 1 mountain artillery division, 15 Pioneer( or engineer) battalions, 3 train regiments which included medics and military hospitals.<sup>28</sup> The military also had regiments and divisions composed of regional or province-specific groups of soldiers. For example, the light infantry Bosnia-Herzegovina Jaeger (light infantry) Battalion was comprised almost entirely of personnel from the newly annexed province of Bosnia. The proportion of Cavalry to artillery in this organization is indicative of the mentality of the Austro-Hungarian armed forces in the period leading up to the First World War. The pervasive attitude of the Common Army at

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<sup>28</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 27.



this time was that the next war would be fought quickly, and that it would provide great opportunities for the accumulation of honor on the battlefield. The cavalry was known as the realm of the honorable combatant, where modern day knights could earn their distinction on the field of battle.<sup>29</sup>

The Austrian *Landwehr*, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century equivalent of the National Guard, was considerably smaller than the Common Army. The *Landwehr* had only 36 infantry regiments, 3 extra rifle regiments, and 3 Cavalry regiments. This composition reflects the light status and combat expectations placed on the *Landwehr*. The *Landwehr* had no artillery, and minimal cavalry, and lacked corps level support units such as field hospitals and pioneer elements. This lack of support elements is indicative of the mission of the *Landwehr*: namely homeland defense and brief combat roles. The *Landwehr* also suffered from lower quality officers in comparison to the *Honvéd*. Many of the great officer candidates who were ethnic Germans and might have applied to the *Landwehr* joined the Common Army instead. The opposite of this phenomenon occurred in Hungary, where Magyarists intentionally joined the *Honvéd* in an attempt to bolster the Hungarian portion of the empire, and support it rather than its Austrian counterpart.<sup>30</sup> Magyarist attempts to increase *Honvéd* prestige and capabilities for possible Hungarian nationalist goals did not go unnoticed by the general staff, and several officers from each graduating class of the Maria Theresia Academy would be assigned to the *Honvéd*.

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<sup>29</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 130.

<sup>30</sup> Strong Magyarist sentiments existed at this time. Nationalism was on the rise in Europe, and Hungary was no exception. As I will address later, Hungarian elements sought to create further autonomy and artificially inflate the percentage of Hungarian native speakers in the military to create more Hungarian speaking army units. Magyarists simply put were individuals who supported the expansion of Magyar (Hungarian) power, through the expansion of Magyar territory, culture, and language use.

The Hungarian *Honvéd* was roughly equivalent to the *Landwehr* in combat expectations and roles, but differed in that it was smaller. The composition ratio of infantry and cavalry between these two organizations was roughly equivalent as well. The *Honvéd* was also populated by a greater proportion of aristocrats than its Austrian equivalent, a result of Magyarist sentiment within the eastern half of the Empire. While the Austrian *Landwehr* was populated with officers generally of older age or lesser training than the Common Army officers, the officers of the *Honvéd* had a particular nationalistic edge. Nationalist Hungarian aristocrats were more likely to join the *Honvéd* than the Common Army, believing the *Honvéd* to be a place where they could further their Magyarist ends.

The general staff of the Empire was composed of officers of the highest rank, from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, which were handpicked by the aristocracy to lead the Common Army.<sup>31</sup> The supreme commander at this time was Conrad von Hötendorf. He was selected by the current *Thronfolger* or heir to the throne: Franz Ferdinand. Conrad was a low level aristocrat; his grandfather had attained his patent of nobility through merit, not birth. Conrad's selection and position is representative of the top tier structure of the Common Army. Conrad was selected by a top tier aristocrat, the heir to the two thrones, and thus executed the actual office of supreme commander, but was considered subordinate militarily to the Archduke. Conrad von Hötendorf's story is a common one not only for the general staff at this time, but also throughout the entire military. The regime had begun to co-opt commoners into the aristocracy beginning in the mid eighteenth century under Maria-Theresia. Particularly by the turn of the twentieth

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<sup>31</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 169

century a multitude of officers at all levels were from lower nobility or were commoners. Lower nobles were officers who were new to the nobility or were little more than regular citizens with a “von” attached to the front of their last name. Typically these men earned noble titles through the service of their father or grandfather in the military. Accession to the nobility was a right for officers, who served 30 years with distinction, including combat service,

The general staff were responsible for all facets of the Common Army, including training, deployment, and planning for future conflicts. They also served as advisers to the Emperor on military matters, such as whether or not to intervene in the first and second Balkan wars, which saw partial mobilizations of the Common Army.

Accordingly, the composition and backgrounds of the general staff were vital in swaying imperial opinion regarding military operations and imperial identity. Incorporating officers who were newly ennobled brought a greater variety and depth of opinions to the Kaiser’s ear, and enabled Franz Josef to make decisions that were more likely to cement his rule. The general staff itself operated out of Vienna, like all major institutions of the government, which was highly centralized in the imperial capital. The centralization of the general staff at first substantiates the argument that it was out of touch with the empire as a whole, however the officers travelled frequently. Hötendorf for example had spent years as a junior officer in Tyrol, and travelled there when planning a preemptive strike against Italy.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Kann, Robert A. ., and Béla K. Király. *The Habsburg Empire in World War*, 177.

The officer corps of the Common Army was a critical portion of the armed forces serving at the Emperor's leisure. Officers set the tone for their individual units and were charged with executing broader strategic goals set forth by the general staff. Unlike the German Empire at this time, officers in the Habsburg army received little preferential treatment if they were aristocrats. The exception to aristocratic advancement and positions of command was with the upper tier of the aristocracy, particularly the royal family. The house of Habsburg possessed a long history of promoting top tier aristocrats, particularly Archdukes, to positions of high command, typically at the army or corps level. Positions below this were usually merit based, and the Common Army was progressive in comparison with other armies on the continent for its inclusion of middle or lower classes into the ranks of officers. Unlike other European armies, men of any socioeconomic class could, with the right training and schooling, become officers of the Common Army. Through the open nature of officer selection men of all backgrounds and classes in the empire were able to utilize the army as a mechanism for social advancement. While the bourgeoisie were able to use business and economic success as advancement in other nations, the military was a much more accessible route in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

While regiments were regionally or ethnically composed, officers were often the exception. The common language of command throughout the army was German, and yet the Common Army remained flexible in its language policy. The multilinguistic tendencies of the greater Habsburg state required the use and admission of a wide variety of languages, with the support of German as the umbrella for command and organization. The Habsburg officer corps represented a wide variety of mother tongues in accordance

with their heterogeneous population. In fact only 60% of the cadets at the Maria Theresia Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt reported German as their mother language in 1912, and only 16% spoke Hungarian as their native language. Every corner of the empire was represented at the military academy, which itself was a modern mechanism of military development, and served as a unifying tool, giving officers from every province exposure to comrades in arms.<sup>33</sup> Officers knew the language of their regiment, since all soldiers were recruited from the same region, and should they did not already speak it soldiers learned at least basic orders in German. Officers of varying ethnic backgrounds typically learned or spoke the languages of their regiments, but were able to use their new found German language skills to further advance themselves in society. Before the outbreak of the war over 70% of officers were of low nobility, or were commoners. This means that all sorts of new groups throughout the empire were producing officers dedicated to preserving the empire. Every socioeconomic class and every nationality had officers serving in the Common Army. Participation in the organization that was the greatest face for Habsburg power inherently gave these groups a stake in the existence of the Empire. Throughout Europe during this period officers were highly respected due to the important roles militaries had in creating and defining the identity of nations and empires. Officers were a driving force of militaries around Europe, which were the main component of prestige building on the continent. The presence of officers at social functions such as the opera and theater in Vienna indicate the social power that one gained by becoming a member of this military class. Officers were distinguished not only through their military uniforms, but by special accessories and weaponry worn even in

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<sup>33</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 92.

battle dress uniforms.<sup>34</sup> In particular officers wore tall hats with plumage, sashes, and sabers. The color and style of these items depended on the type of unit the officer led, but were easily recognizable as separating the man as an officer. The ability given to members of the officer corps, and by extension to all men who could become officers, proved to be a unifying factor across the empire, creating in the officer corps a well trained, competent, linguistically unified corps dedicated to the persistence and strengthening of not only the house of Habsburg but of the empire as a whole.

The officers of the empire were also the driving force of another form of modernization: paperwork.<sup>35</sup> Profiles on units, soldiers, officers, and detailed logistical reports were created and sent in to the General Staff. As communication technology increased the amount of information that commanders and generals required to engage in modern training exercises and warfare increased, and officers bore the brunt of the necessary paperwork to transmit this information.

The non-commissioned officers of the Habsburg Common Army were members of the enlisted force who had grown veteran enough to assume the role of non commissioned officers (NCO's) The Habsburg NCO corps was perhaps the weakest structural portion of its institution. It was not nearly as empowered as in other militaries. The officer corps had a much more direct hand in the day to day training and leading of the soldiers, absorbing much of the traditional role of the NCO corps. The NCO's did not have the same level of social mobility that officers had, for NCO's were always of the

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<sup>34</sup> Jung, Peter, and Darko Pavlovic. *The Austro-Hungarian Forces in World War I*. Oxford: Osprey, 2003, 14.

<sup>35</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 56.

lower classes and lacked the general strategic and tactical training of officers. This lower tier of training, combined with the lack of social mobility and their background as enlisted soldiers brought the NCO's closer to their soldiers than to the officers. As such the members of the NCO corps were an effective mechanism to reinforce the unifying factors of the empire in so far as they were able to support and systematize the leadership of the officer corps over the enlisted soldiers. The enlisted soldiers themselves were conscripts or volunteers drawn from the provinces of the empire as a whole. Soldiers and officers were recruited from specific regions, but then assigned to garrisons in different portions of the empire. All in all, recruitment and training created a fairly mobile military unit with representation from across the empire and diverse regional assignments.

These postings not only prevented nationalist groups from having access to military personnel that they could co-opt for separatist agitation, but it also allowed for a greater sharing of cultures and identities across the empire. Relocating soldiers from their home provinces also allowed them to gain a better understanding of the Empire. Rather than remaining isolated in their province, and assimilating nationalist sentiments from local leaders they were able to serve the Empire in a wider area, exposing them to other servants of the same emperor. This is different from the common pattern of civil migration that occurred within the empire. Typically if citizens moved around in the empire, it was those of the lower classes from outlying provinces moving to Vienna, in search of work. Once a part of the culture of "Red Vienna" they typically were radicalized, for Vienna was a city of extremes, and a tense place at the turn of the

century.<sup>36</sup> The system of shifting soldiers from one province to another also reflected Austria's use of the modern system of garrisoning soldiers in different areas than their home region. This training technique indicates the modernization underway in the Austro-Hungarian military, indicating that it was advancing doctrinally, even if it was not advancing at the same rate as top tier powers such as Germany.

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<sup>36</sup> "Red Vienna" refers to the political leanings of Vienna. While the term is most often used to refer to the dominance of the Social Democrats of the city government of Vienna in the period of the Second Republic (post second world war) the term generally refers to the socialist and social democrats leaning of the urban populace. In recent years however the grip of the social democrats seems to be loosening, and the majority party had to form a coalition government with the green party, the first time that the party did not win the city elections outright since the birth of the second republic.



### **The Army as a Unifying Force**

When examining the theoretical paradigm of decline and fall in relation to political entities, the time comes when one must examine the functionality of the alternative lens proposed here. In this case the structure of the Austro-Hungarian Common Army, Austrian *Landwehr*, and Hungarian *Honvéd* have already been laid out. The next step is to explore how this structure was used to combat what those who support the theory of decline and fall would call the unstoppable forces of nationalism. In order to properly function as a military unit the Austro-Hungarian Common Army needed to create as cohesive a force as possible. Given the divergent forces confronting the Habsburg Empire in *Fin de Siècle* Europe the general staff and the Kaiser were forced to build a military that through institutional and social means would rally the officers and soldiers of twelve different nationalities around the personality of the Kaiser and the flag of the Habsburg double monarchy. The most basic barrier confronting the military was language. The multitude of mother tongues, coupled with the lack of education, meant that the Common Army needed to create a flexible structure to adapt to a variety of spoken languages. Somehow the structure had to allocate soldiers to regiments populated predominately by fellow soldiers who shared a common language, or to place enough soldiers of a certain minority in a regiment to tip their over 20% which then ensured that all orders were issued in their language as well. Recruiting soldiers proportional to their nationality's percentage within the wider populace ensured that languages used in the military was an accurate cross section of the greater Habsburg state. Various regimental laws required that pertinent information be published in their language, and officers

regardless of their aristocratic rank or ethnicity were required to speak the language of any group that comprised 20% of the regiment or more. Beyond cultural terms of appeasement meant to render the monarchy more amenable to the various ethnicities that comprised the Common Army, the general staff took advantage of the status given by membership in the armed forces to draw capable personnel. The military also mobilized the geopolitical situation in Europe to unify its forces, using external enemies to generate internal solidarity.

Without a doubt the clearest problem to facing the general staff was the multitude of languages present in the empire. Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenians, Romanians, Poles, Ruthenians, Croatians, Serbians, Bosnians, and Italians all were descended from distinct linguistic heritages, and because of the proportional conscription laws they were all present within the Common Army.<sup>37</sup> Additionally the Compromise of 1867 ensured that all languages and cultures were on equal footing in the eyes of the Kaiser, which meant that the military could not proclaim that one specific language was the official language of the military, although in the Common Army all soldiers learned at least a few basic command words in German.<sup>38</sup> As we have seen, to ensure that the various ethnicities were fully recognized languages that were spoken by at least 20% of the regiment became known as languages for that regiment.<sup>39</sup> This required that all officers of that regiment must be proficient in that specific language. For example,

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<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that Slovaks and Slovenians were not necessarily noted as separate ethnicities, but they have since been acknowledged internationally with the creation of their own sovereign states as distinct from the Czech and Croat peoples respectively. Additionally the term Ruthenian is a contemporary term from the turn of the century. It translates as “little Russian” and was used to describe the people who now identify as Ukrainians.

<sup>38</sup> Steed, Henry Wickham. *The Hapsburg Monarchy*, 65.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 64.

a German aristocrat from the small German community of Bistritt in Transylvania who became an officer was required to learn Romanian, because the recruiting region was populated with Germans and Romanians.<sup>40</sup>

While the agendas of each nationality were distinct, there were movements within nearly every group that sought to separate their people and their constructed geographic homeland from the Habsburg Monarchy. Some of these groups, such as the Italians, were few in number within the actual Empire, but had clear attachments to a nearby nation state with whom they identified. Others, such as the Czechs, were contained nearly entirely within the Empire, and yet sought increasing autonomy. Still others such as the Polish citizens of the Empire were divided among different imperial powers, and had no territory to claim as their own. These movements had varying strengths and levels of support within their own regional communities.

These nationalistic movements attempted to construct unique identities that existed independently of the Habsburg state. One of the longest running and strongest separatist movements in the empire was the Czech movement.<sup>41</sup> The strength of Czech political power was strong enough that at one point a tri-partite government was considered. Under this tri-partite structure the name of the empire would be changed to the Austro-Hungarian-Czech Empire.<sup>42</sup> This potential governmental structure shows the willingness of the Czech people and politicians to remain a part of the monarchy, and rather than becoming a sovereign country the Czech people would be granted greater

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<sup>40</sup> See map at end of chapter.

<sup>41</sup> Robert A. Kann, *The Multinational Empire*, 211.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 212.

autonomy within the Monarchy itself. Czech nationalists were not so much against the Kaiser and his household, as they were against the ethnic Germans, and their cultural and political control over the Czech people and their home territory.<sup>43</sup> This allegiance to the Kaiser was ingrained during military training and service. The Common Army did not preach allegiance to the halves of the empire so much as to the whole. If the Common Army were to support either the Austrian Empire or the Hungarian Kingdom more than the other than its counterpart would demand action to counter an asymmetrical relationship to the whole. The Kaiser and the Common Army were in a very precarious position in that they had to act in accordance with the wishes of both halves of the empire, and make it clear that they favored neither over the other. The various ethnicities within the Empire then held more allegiance to their comrades in arms and their Kaiser than they necessarily did to the instruments of the state, or to the specific administrations that governed the half of the Empire from which they originated. Various neighboring nation states or separatist movements within the empire sought to gain the loyalty of the distinct nationalities. This was especially true for the former military personnel who had the proper training and background to become useful revolutionaries. Organizations from all points along the political spectrum competed for these soldiers.<sup>44</sup> Prior to the second half of the First World War, these movements' attempts to gain the support of the average imperial subject or soldier in a fight against the rule of Franz Josef were weak at best.

The inability of radical revolutionary movements to siphon support from the double

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 211.

<sup>44</sup> Considerable difficulty exists when parsing through Eastern European primary sources over this matter. Socialists following the First World War rewrote portions of history to lend greater weight to the socialist revolutionaries than the nationalists. Examples of soldiers engaging in revolutionary action following the war can be found in groups that returned from Soviet prison camps, where they were indoctrinated with communist sentiments. Zeman, Zbynek Anthony Bohuslav. *The Break-up of the Habsburg Empire*. London [usw.: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1961, 160.

monarchy indicates the strength of the unificatory abilities of the army, which existed in a symbiotic relationship with the house of Habsburg.

While German nationalism was on the rise prior to the outbreak of the First World War German nationalistic influence upon the Common Army was minimal at best. Since the compromise of 1867, all languages may have been equal in the eyes of the Kaiser, but the two administrations were free to create official state languages.<sup>45</sup> The Austrian Empire had abandoned German as an official language, and on its bank notes the denomination of the currency was printed in 8 languages.<sup>46</sup> German nationalists then did not have the grip on the Austrian administration in the same way that Magyarists controlled the administration of the Hungarian Parliament. Although the Hungarian Kingdom was populated with a diverse range of nationalities Magyar was the sole language used when printing currency.<sup>47</sup> While German was the language of command, and was the most widely spoken language in the military, this was due to circumstance. German nationalists sought to promulgate German culture and language, but they lacked the political power and support to advance their aims, and efforts by the administration of the Austrian Empire indicate its resistance to German nationalist influence.<sup>48</sup> On the contrary, efforts were made by Magyarists to fill ranks of regiments with at least 20%

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<sup>45</sup> Steed, Henry Wickham. *The Hapsburg Monarchy*, 65.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>48</sup> While increased use of the German language in the military could be a conceivable goal of the German nationalists, it is much more likely that its use was the result of necessity, especially given the lack of evidence that the Kaiser himself was a German nationalist. Steed, Henry Wickham. *The Hapsburg Monarchy*, 65-67.

ethnic Hungarians or Magyar speakers so as to spread the use of Magyar as a language in the military.<sup>49</sup>

The widespread use of German in the Common Army actually served to further the social advancement of the Austro-Hungarian soldiers. While literacy was higher in the Austrian state, it was relatively low in the Hungarian. Soldiers who lacked the ability to read and write in their own mother tongue often learned at least some written German while serving in the military in addition to the spoken German that they picked up during the course of their service. Soldiers from all corners of the empire took to both written and spoken German as a viable alternative.<sup>50</sup> Radicals across the empire decried the learning of German as a thinly veiled attempt to propagate German nationalism by the monarchy, but to the soldiers who learned the language, it was not so ideological. For the soldiers of the Habsburg Monarchy who spoke different languages, they were able to communicate at least on a rudimentary level with German, using it as a *lingua franca*. Indeed the Common Army was seen as an educational force, “It...exercises an educational influence on the bulk of the population”<sup>51</sup> The educational work done by the military gained it supporters, for the soldiers who left service were more readily equipped to pursue other work, and in other locations. The ability to speak German opened many doors to an imperial subject from Croatia. Whereas before even if he was literate he may have only been able to practically function in a small corner of the Austrian Empire, he now could work in any German dominated region of the wider Habsburg Monarchy, or

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid,64-66.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid,64 and 65.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid,70.

alternatively he could seek employment internationally in the vast German Reich which had an extremely strong economy.<sup>52</sup>

The Austro-Hungarian military like all modern militaries pursued the best possible individuals to fill its officer and enlisted ranks. Rising militarism throughout Europe granted increasingly higher social status to members of the military, and even more so officers. The presence of the upper echelons of the aristocracy among the officer corps of Europe's militaries played a heavy hand in the increased social status granted to officers. The presence of the upper echelons of the aristocracy among the officer corps of Europe's militaries played a heavy hand in the increased social status granted to officers. The appeal of an increase in societal status for those educated individuals who decided to become officers was one of the best tools available to the Common Army when it came to pursuing competent individuals to fill its officer ranks. Members of the educated population in any society are a limited resource, and as the military gained a greater share of that population it accentuated its competence and prestige. A side benefit for the Empire was that as educated individuals donned the black and yellow they became increasingly less likely to support nationalist movements over a wider imperial identity.<sup>53</sup>

As militaries grew in size and prestige at the turn of the century, officers gained access to certain areas of society that would be out of their reach otherwise. Many members of the middle or lower classes took advantage of the growing number of cadet academies and became officers, which rewarded them with rising social prestige. The

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid,68-70.

<sup>53</sup> Black and Yellow were the colors of the House of Habsburg, and officers were said to "bleed yellow and black" if they were particularly patriotic. The flag of the monarchy was a simple black horizontal bar atop a yellow one. See photo archive for a First World War progaranda poster utilizing black and yellow.

level of prestige granted to even junior officers is evident in literature from the period, including Arthur Schnitzler's *Leutnant Gustl*.<sup>54</sup> While *Gustl* is a scathing criticism of social problems in the military it ironically also serves as a clear indicator of how social status acquired by joining the military could re-shape individual lives.<sup>55</sup> Gustl, recognized as a Lieutenant everywhere by his uniform and officer's saber, is greeted throughout Vienna with the phrase "Ich habe die Ehre!" which translates roughly to "I have the honor", a greeting which is used for one who is of an upper middle or elite social rank.<sup>56</sup> Gustl's honor is insulted by a middle aged baker, a man who is well respected, but Gustl is not able to respond to the insult with a duel, which was commonplace, because even as a junior officer Gustl's relative rank in society was well above that of the baker. Social mobility proved to be an enticing feature of military membership that drew both members of the lower class like Gustl, and members of the bourgeoisie and the upper class.

Graduates from the top tier of secondary education institutions in the empire, recipients of the coveted *abitur*, were allowed immediate access to officer training. A select few individuals were also allowed to attend the imperial military academy, known as the K.u.K Maria Theresia Military Academy, and applications poured in from all across the empire. The military academy was renowned enough that two cadets from China trained there at one point.<sup>57</sup> By creating these training centers, and filling them with the empire's best and brightest young men the social status granted by the rank of an officer was perpetuated even further; the participation of these cultural and social elites

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<sup>54</sup> Schnitzler, Arthur, and Marina Dahmen. *Leutnant Gustl*. Braunschweig: Schroedel, 2009, 42.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 4-10, 42.

<sup>57</sup> Deak, István. *Beyond Nationalism*, 165-170.



reproduced the system and created a mutually reinforcing relationship between highly trained individuals from all ethnic backgrounds and all regions of the empire and the military as a whole. The personalities that existed within the military also served to draw highly sought after individuals into the ranks. The Kaiser himself wore a military style uniform almost around the clock, and considered himself the first servant of the state.<sup>58</sup> All male members of the Habsburg line joined the military from a young age. Franz Ferdinand for example was a Lieutenant before he reached the age of 20.<sup>59</sup> The presence of popular and important figures donning military garb and joining the military supported both the regime and lent credence to the military as an institution, and to its agenda as a whole. Those who sought to associate themselves with the imperial line were persuaded even more to join the military. By engaging and co-opting elites of all ethnicities and backgrounds the military was able to combat the divergent forces. Many of the young future leaders of these cultural and ethnic groups became personally devoted to strengthening the monarchy.

Officers formed bonds and relationships with officers and soldiers from other ethnicities, thereby creating the framework for cultural exchange, and lessening the possibility of conflict between ethnicities. Their interactions with one another at cadet academies and in their regiment facilitated these interactions. While regimental recruiting was regional, therefore prone to creating ethnic majorities, ethnicities were often intermingled in locations throughout the empire.<sup>60</sup> Ethnic Germans could be found all the

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<sup>58</sup> See Visual Archive for Franz Josef in uniform.

<sup>59</sup> Sosnosky, Theodor Von. *Franz Ferdinand, Der Erzherzog-thronfolger; Ein Lebensbild*. München: R. Oldenbourg, 1929, 6.

<sup>60</sup> See map at end of chapter.

way to the Carpathian Mountains bordering Romania, while ethnic Croatians could be found in the interior of the Hungarian Kingdom. Of course some units from regions like Karinthia were composed almost entirely of ethnic Germans, but the dispersal of ethnicities and nationalities across the empire ensured that regiments would almost always be comprised of at least two ethnicities if not more. Some regiments were filled with men who spoke up to 6 different mother tongues.<sup>61</sup> While it is true that some of the more extreme political parties in the Austrian parliament were German nationalist groups that came from ethnic bordering territories, generally the territories that bordered the Czechs in the northern corner of the Empire, the mutual hardships suffered by the soldiers created a different shared experience than that of citizens who lived near those of another culture.<sup>62</sup>

An excellent example of this trend is Field Marshall Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf who was first appointed chief of the general staff in 1906, by Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Field Marshall von Hötzendorf represented this class of lower nobility who had been elevated by means of merit. His grandfather had earned his patent of nobility through military service, and had also married into the von Hötzendorf lineage. Conrad's family represented those members of the middle echelon of the Austrian *Gesellschaft*, or society, who had earned their way into the nobility. These educated members of society had been co-opted by the monarchy. Conrad was described by fellow generals who fought alongside him in WW1 as an extremely clever man who understood the

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<sup>61</sup> Deak, István. *Beyond Nationalism*, 162-170.

<sup>62</sup> The most nationalistic groups within nationalities typically lived at the border zones between national groups within the empire, in areas such as Karinthia( the modern southernmost province of the Federal Republic of Austria)

centrifugal forces tearing at the edges of his beloved country, and took an aggressive approach to resolving them.<sup>63</sup> Conrad especially knew the Tyrolean front from his time stationed there as a junior officer, and planned accordingly for an offensive targeted at returning Udine, and eventually Venice, to Habsburg control, attacking from Habsburg Trentino, and along the coast from Trieste.<sup>64</sup> Conrad aggressively pushed for a preemptive strike against Italy, even though they were still nominal allies of the Empire. The young kingdom of Italy sought to unite the ethnic Italian regions of southern Tyrol, and to seize the coveted port city of Trieste. Trieste was at the geographic edge of ethnic Italian settlements, and had served as the major port of the Habsburg Empire for decades, and was the home city of Franz Josef's late brother, Kaiser Maximilian I von Mexiko. Trieste was of more value to Italy as a symbol of its new national strength than as any kind of military or commercial center. Conrad wanted to launch an early offensive against the poorly trained Italian soldiers, and create a buffer against further Italian expansion, believing that subduing the national army of Italy would quell internal unrest among Italians in the western portions of the empire.<sup>65</sup> In addition to planning assaults against Italy, Conrad also urged the Monarchy to launch an operation against the expansionist kingdom of Serbia. After a coup that resulted in the installation of a king who did not have an Austrophil foreign policy, Serbia became increasingly antagonistic towards the Habsburgs, and grew closer to the Russian empire.<sup>66</sup> The success of the Slavic national kingdoms of Bulgaria and Serbia in the first Balkan war only served to increase Slavic nationalism at the periphery of the Habsburg lands. Conrad wanted to use

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<sup>63</sup> Robert A. Kann and Béla K. Király, *The Habsburg Empire in World War I*. 73.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 73.

the full power of the Habsburg military to invade Serbia, and either annex portions of the land, or install a friendly regime.

The Common Army worked alongside other aspects of the Habsburg state to garner support for the monarchy. The various ministries in fact worked well together, especially in the case of the Bosnian occupation. Prior to its official annexation in 1908, as part of the Austrian Empire, Bosnia was officially occupied by the Austrian military. In a similar fashion to the period of reconstruction in the American South following the American Civil War, the Austrian military oversaw the development of Bosnia during the occupation period. Bosnia underwent dramatic increases in standards of living, education, and infrastructure during this time of occupation, and by the outbreak of war in 1914 it was more modern than some parts of the Hungarian Kingdom, which still lacked basic literacy and had poor rail and road infrastructure.<sup>67</sup> In fact, the Hungarian administration blocked some of the further expansion of Bosnian infrastructure.<sup>68</sup> As a result of this increased development it was noted that Bosnian soldiers fought hardest secondary only to ethnic German soldiers during the First World War, and stood up to harsher combat conditions than any other provincial ethnicity.<sup>69</sup> While the military oversaw this expansion and protected it, it was private companies and other ministries that actually executed the construction of railways, and improved the economic climate that enabled this development to occur.<sup>70</sup> The importance of the peace, law, order, and economic development that the military and state brought with them to Bosnia cannot be

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<sup>67</sup> May, Arthur J. *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy: 1914 – 1918*, 406.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 406-410.

<sup>69</sup> Robert A. Kann and Béla K. Király, *The Habsburg Empire in World War I*, 79.

<sup>70</sup> May, Arthur J. *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy: 1914 – 1918*, 406.

understated.<sup>71</sup> The regions beyond the Austrian frontier had known nothing but war, chaos, persecution, and destruction for centuries. The Balkan regions had been the battlefields for countless wars, Russian against Ottoman, Ottoman against Austrian, and recently Balkan against Balkan with the second Balkan war pitting Bulgaria against Serbia. International opinion of the Habsburg empire was favorable in this respect, in that the Austro-Hungarians were seen as the harbingers of culture, law, and order to these “back” corners of Europe that were still viewed as very backward.<sup>72</sup> Where the Austrian state expanded so too did the extension of increased economic wealth, literacy, and a decrease in crime and anarchy. Bosnia again serves as an excellent standard in that it was the most recently added portion of the Monarchy, in Bosnia the work of the police, coupled with the backing of the military garrison, was seen as a “miracle”<sup>73</sup> because it so drastically reduced crime and provided for the safety of the newest subjects of the Empire.<sup>74</sup> With safety and economic development also came the educational benefits of belonging to a greater Austro-Hungarian Empire: scholarships flooded in for Bosnian students to attend universities in Vienna, where they were able to interact with other ethnicities and culture, and learn the *lingua franca* of the empire.<sup>75</sup> These scholarships and this safety would not be possible without the existence of the order purchased by the presence and competence of the multinational Common Army.

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<sup>71</sup> May, Arthur J. *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy: 1914 – 1918*, 406.

<sup>72</sup> May, Arthur J. *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy: 1914 - 1918*, 406. The notion of the Balkans being “backward” is problematic. The region was home to hundreds of years of intense conflict that had left little room for development, and the Ottoman Empire had in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century poured many valuable resources into developing the region, only to lose it all in the Berlin Conference and the Balkan wars. The region was “backward” due to the accumulative damage of multiple conflicts, not due to cultural weakness, or the result of poor Ottoman administration.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 406.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 405-406.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 406.

The impact of the Kaiser himself must also be included when considering the military as a bulwark against centrifugal nationalistic forces attempting to rip the empire apart at the seams. The Kaiser was a true paternal figure. He viewed the officers and soldiers of his military like he viewed his children, and he believed them to be the single greatest force for defending the empire of his ancestors, and his descendants.<sup>76</sup> He wrote a famous order from the edges of his empire, Ruthenian populated Galicia, in 1903 during the Hungarian constitutional crisis, where he said among other things that he considered the military “the strong power to defend the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy against every foe” and that “my whole Defensive Force will continue to tread the path of..duty, permeated by that spirit of union...which respects every national characteristic and solves .all antagonisms by utilizing the special qualities of each race for the welfare of the great whole”<sup>77</sup> Franz Josef truly believed that his military was capable of drawing on the strengths of the many nations that together composed his great state, and that they were much stronger together than alone. Franz Josef was adamant in the defense of the unity of his military, allowing the Magyarists few concessions in their pursuit of greater autonomy for Hungarian units in the Common Army.<sup>78</sup> Franz Josef’s refusal to dilute the abilities of his Common Army at the moment of unification reflects the importance that the military held in the eyes of the dynasty. The Common Army was the sole aspect of the state that Franz Josef would not compromise on. He had seen as Kaiser the revolution of 1848, and the reforms that followed, and the compromise of 1867 which resulted in the

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<sup>76</sup> Steed, Henry Wickham. *The Hapsburg Monarchy*, 66 and 71.

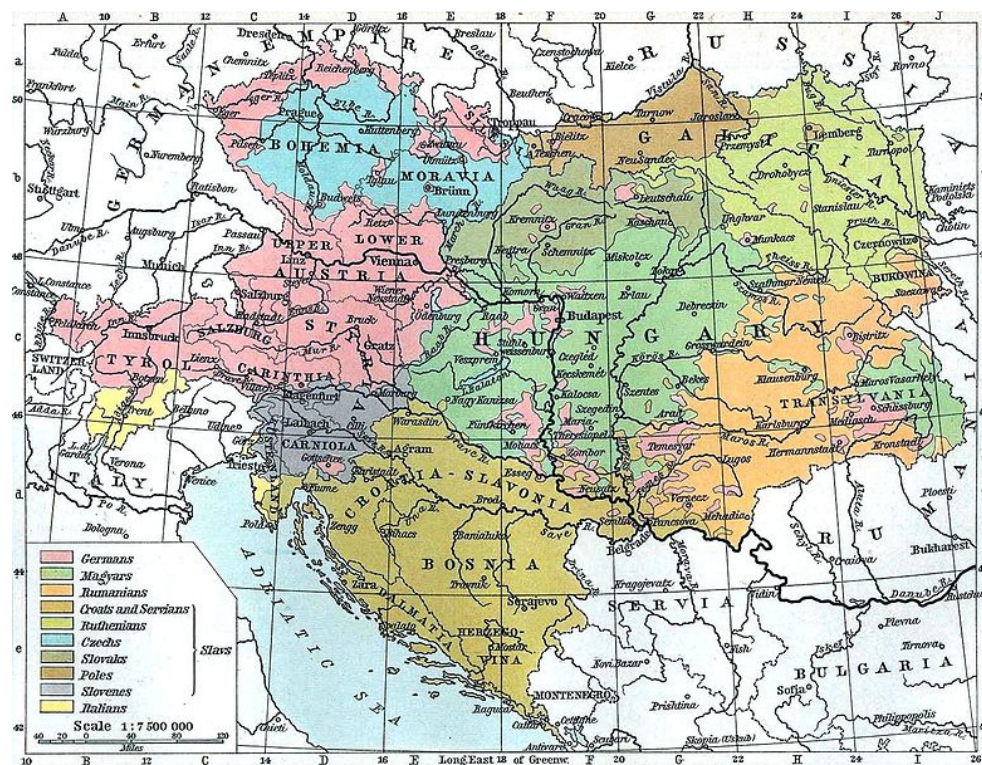
<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 65.

halving of his country, but at this crucial juncture he would not appease nationalist forces by relinquishing control of aspects of his military to the national parliament in Hungary.

The Common Army of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was not a feeble collection of souls awaiting their inevitable destruction at the turn of the century. On the contrary, the agents within the military drew on the tools available to it, social, cultural, institutional, and economic to unify its force, and in so doing attempted to create a country that would be able to draw upon the strengths of its multiple ethnicities, rather than fall prey to separatist movements that threatened to tear the empire apart.

Undeniably the Empire and its military faced a monumental task as nationalism surged leading up to the First World War, yet the “ancient” force proved resourceful and adept at changing itself to face the coming trials, despite a relative lack of resources and funding compared to other great European powers.



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<sup>79</sup> Source for map [www.lib.utexas.edu](http://www.lib.utexas.edu), created by William Robert Shepherd.

This map does an excellent job of showing large concentrations of national groups throughout the geographic territories of the Habsburg Empire. The dispersion of German groups in particular meant that Germans were recruited into a wide variety of regiments, since regiments were created from regional recruitment efforts.



## Public Opinion & the Armed Forces of Austria-Hungary

Legitimacy is absolutely essential to any government. Without the long term consent and support of the populace that it proposes to govern a government cannot properly function. Armies drawn from the citizenry of a state, such as the conscripted Austro-Hungarian military, in a similar fashion must have the support not only of their commander and chief, the Kaiser in this instance, but also of the populace that they aim to defend. Understanding the necessity of legitimacy, the public opinion of the Common Army, *Landwehr*, and *Honvéd* are critical to fully understanding the situation prior to the First World War. The multitude of ethnicities, cultures, and languages that composed the empire and the military presented a problem unique from other western powers for the Habsburg Empire. The military had to not only been seen as a legitimate protector by these various ethnicities, but it had to compel them into taking part in its structure if it could genuinely attempt to establish an imperial identity.

Arthur Schnitzler's *Leutnant Gustl*, discussed in the previous chapter, displayed the negative aspects of the ethnic German officer culture present within the Common Army. Schnitzler also captured the interactions between officers and other members of society in dramatic fashion. Officers were highly regarded; their profession was seen as noble and among the most prestigious. Schnitzler himself was for a time a reserve officer in the *Landwehr* and was also a Jewish doctor from Vienna. This varied experience combined with his time in the *Landwehr* gave him a decidedly unique perspective when reflecting and commenting on the military. Schnitzler was part of an emerging but relatively small group of artists known as *Jung Wien* or "young Vienna" and this group

was not so much young in age as they were in thought.<sup>80</sup> Schnitzler was the lone member of this group of modernists who had served as an officer. *Gustl* reveals the views often held by the emerging modernist intelligentsia. The new modernists like Schnitzler and *Jung Wien* held negative views of the aristocratic nature of the officer corps, and of the growing anti-Semitism in the military. The growing anti-Semitism was a problem not only within the military, but in Viennese and Austrian culture in general. Karl Lueger, the mayor of Vienna during the turn of the century was a populist who used anti-Semitic beliefs as a rallying point for a Christian conservative base of the middle and lower classes.<sup>81</sup> Anti-Semitism was a divisive issue at this point, and split support for the military as is seen with *Gustl*. The Kaiser refused to support Lueger's confirmation as Mayor the first four times that he was elected, because of his populist anti-Semitic views.<sup>82</sup> Franz Josef knew that these views would not enable all Viennese citizens to be treated equally under a municipal government run by Lueger.<sup>83</sup> Although anti-Semitic feelings were on the rise among German nationalists groups, many ethnic Jewish families were sending their sons to become officers, and both German nationalists and Jewish families continued to send their sons to join the military. Schnitzler was not the only modernist author who had strong opinions regarding the military in Austria. As the leading arm of the state many future leaders in the empire entertained the idea of joining the military, or at least commented on it in their writings.

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<sup>80</sup> The *Jung Wien* movement was populated with authors such as Hermann Bahr, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Arthur Schnitzler, and others. They were the forefront of modernist writing in Austria at the time.

<sup>81</sup> Wunberg, Gotthart. *Die Wiener Moderne: Lit., Kunst Und Musik Zwischen 1890 Und 1910*. Stuttgart: P. Reclam, 1984, 124-131.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 124-131.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 124-126.

Future Zionist leader Theodor Herzl once wrote that what he longed for most was to be a Prussian aristocrat, and a career officer in the Common Army.<sup>84</sup> This represents the height of assimilated Jewish culture in the Habsburg state. Herzl's family raised him not in the Jewish tradition, but in the liberal German one. Herzl represents a unique generation in Austrian heritage that abandoned liberalism. The final victory of the liberals that occurred in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century became quickly overshadowed. The coalition proved unstable, liberal thought splintered, and extremism prevailed in its absence. Herzl and Karl Lueger were both liberals before becoming Zionist and anti-Semitic respectively.<sup>85</sup> Herzl later abandoned his pursuits, and embraced his ethnic Jewish heritage, devoting his life to the creation of a Jewish state. Herzl became jaded with the transformative power of liberalism when he spent years working as a correspondent for the Austrian newspaper *Die Neue Freie Presse* in Paris, then the capital of European liberal thought. As Herzl saw liberalism torn apart during the Dreyfuss scandal he grew increasingly disenchanted, and turned to Zionism.<sup>86</sup>

Herzl was raised in a traditional liberal German fashion. His family was deeply assimilated within German culture, even though he was born in Budapest.<sup>87</sup> His liberal German education, including time spent in a *Bursenschaft* or fraternity, was typical for

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<sup>84</sup> Schorske, Carl E. *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*. New York: Vintage Books, 1981, 151. Herzl's desire to join the military and the aristocracy was representative of this liberal wave that sought participation in the top social strata of the Empire.

<sup>85</sup> Schorske, Carl E. *Fin-de-siècle Vienna*, 116-151.

<sup>86</sup> The Dreyfuss scandal revolved around an ethnic Jew who was a general in the French army named Dreyfuss. Dreyfuss was accused of being a spy for the newly founded German Empire, which had just defeated France in the disastrous Franco-Prussian war of 1870 which ended in complete civil turmoil for the French. Although there was essentially no evidence the conservatives closed ranks against Dreyfuss and the country became sharply divided at all levels regarding his trial. He was eventually exiled to French Guyana in South America, even though he was later proved to be innocent.

<sup>87</sup> Schorske, Carl E. *Fin-de-siècle Vienna*, 146-151.

that of upper middle class Germans at this time.<sup>88</sup> As such, the attitudes he developed towards the military were representative of a large segment of the professional class. The military was viewed as a highly prestigious and advantageous career path, especially given the ability officer's had to gain a patent of nobility after 30 years of service. Herzl was not an anomaly in this time. Many of the Jewish families in Vienna and throughout the Empire were assimilating into German culture, and as such as they sought professions that accrued honor and prestige within this Christian-German environment, including officership within the military. The rapid influx of Jewish officers is undoubtedly part of the reason that Gustl notes that the young man his lady friend spent with must undoubtedly be a young Jewish officer.<sup>89</sup> The fact these influential Jewish families were for the first time diverting their sons from traditional professions to military Officership shows the widespread appeal and social benefits gained from pursuing this career. In fact, at the turn of the century over 20% of all reserve officers in the Habsburg forces were Jewish by ethnicity.<sup>90</sup> This is a rapid turnaround from a point 100 years beforehand when Jewish citizens of the Empire were first allowed to join the military. While Jewish citizens were overrepresented in the reserve officer corps, ethnicities as a whole in the empire were fairly well represented in at least the rank and file if not the officer corps.

Ethnic Germans were the group most over represented among all groups within the officer corps, followed by Hungarians. This is most likely due to the educational

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<sup>88</sup> Historically German fraternities have had a decidedly nationalist tone. First formed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century around the idea of unifying all Germans, these fraternities predate a unified Germany. Honor was incredibly important within them, just as honor was important to officers. Any damage to one's honor from another member of equal social rank had to be resolved through a duel, typically with sabers. Otto von Bismarck is perhaps the most famous example of a man changed by a *Bursenschaft*, it was in his fraternity that Bismarck became a defender of conservative thinking, and where he first began to identify with the aristocracy.

<sup>89</sup> Schnitzler, Arthur, and Marina Dahmen. *Leutnant Gustl*, 10.

<sup>90</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 175.

opportunities available to Germans, as they came from the best educated and developed portions of the empire. In the rank and file of the empire, the representation of all other ethnicities closely mirrored that of the general populace.<sup>91</sup>

Unfortunately Gallup had not yet developed its survey gathering techniques before the First World War, which means that assessing public opinion with regard to the military and its general competence requires other means. The greatest barometer from this time period for understanding public support or belief in the military is the outbreak of war in 1914. The newspapers from the 29th of July, 1914 were the first issues printed after the declaration of war on Serbia on the 28th. The words of these papers reveal the positive views that citizens of the Empire had for their men in uniform. The conservative *Reichspost* in Vienna printed a letter from the Kaiser to the people of Austria-Hungary on its title page, a letter that ended by saying that the Kaiser credited the All-mighty for the victory that his forces would soon achieve.<sup>92</sup> The belief in Kaiser Franz Josef and the military went hand in hand. Franz Josef viewed the military as his family, and his best tool for preserving the monarchy. He was publicly supportive of it, and used the full force of his hard and soft power to negate attempts to dilute its purpose or strength.<sup>93</sup> While the *Reichspost* was arguably more supportive due to its conservative nature, support for the military is also evident in the *Linzer Tages-Post* from the provincial industrial city of Linz in Upper Austria, near the border with Germany. The *Tages-Post* quotes this final line crediting God for sure victory before the first of the battles have even been fought,

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<sup>91</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 180.

<sup>92</sup> "ANNO - AustriaN Newspapers Online Historische österreichische Zeitungen Und Zeitschriften Online." ANNO. Accessed April 26, 2013. <http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=rpt&datum=19140729&zoom=33>

<sup>93</sup> Steed, Henry Wickham. *The Hapsburg Monarchy*, 67.

using it as the conclusion in its own front page article about the war's outbreak.<sup>94</sup> This use of the Kaiser's words of sure victory does not directly address the military, but it illustrates the faith the populace has in the military. When the Kaiser made these claims of swift victory over the Kingdom of Serbia, the various newspapers supported this claim by propagating it, and did not follow up the Kaiser's words with doubtful comments about the strength of the military. Throughout the war, the newspapers were highly supportive of the troops, and demonstrated faith in the soldiers of the empire. These newspapers all had varying circulation sizes, with provincial papers such as the *Tages-Post* less widely read than larger papers in Vienna such the *Reichspost*. Yet they indicate a cross-section in readership that remained relatively united in their acclaim of the military and the Kaiser upon the outbreak of war.

Even after the death of Kaiser Franz Josef in 1916, the troops were displayed in a positive light; this demonstrates that although the military and Franz Josef had a symbiotic relationship, that the military still enjoyed wide support from the populace even as the war dragged on, and losses on the eastern front mounted. Some papers, like the decidedly left leaning *Arbeiterwille*<sup>95</sup> did have articles as the war dragged on that questioned the necessity of the war, and its usefulness. In particular *Arbeiterwille* reported in 1916 that the majority of the Austro-Hungarian population supported the war

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<sup>94</sup> "ANNO - AustriaN Newspapers Online Historische österreichische Zeitungen Und Zeitschriften Online." ANNO <http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=tpt&datum=19140729&zoom=33>

<sup>95</sup> Self Defined as the "Organ of the working people in Styria and Karinthia( both provinces, now states in the Federal Republic of Austria)" This publication undoubtedly had a socialist spin, even though it was circulated in strong catholic conservative provinces. "ANNO - AustriaN Newspapers Online Historische österreichische Zeitungen Und Zeitschriften Online." ANNO <http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=awi&datum=19140729&zoom=33>

when it was promised as a local conflict, but were not prepared for a world war.<sup>96</sup> Even in this article deriding the politics surrounding the conflict the newspaper supports the troops, considering them victims of the war who thought that they would be home by Christmas.<sup>97</sup> The widespread support for the troops was characteristic of not only the Austro-Hungarian double monarchy but of powers throughout Europe. The euphoric nature of the jubilee of both the populace at large and the soldiery at the outbreak of war in the summer of 1914 was also common throughout the continent. In this way Austria-Hungary was similar to the other European powers, it had a shared imperial anxiety, and now it also shared jubilation at the outbreak of the conflict.

Thus it can be argued that the Austro-Hungarian military enjoyed widespread support from all groups within the empire. Separatist groups undoubtedly attacked the military as an institution of the empire, but there is little evidence to suggest that the populace at large supported shadowy separatist movements over the military. Few armed revolutionary elements existed, the Serbian Black Hand being an obvious exception, and the Austro-Hungarian military and police largely had a monopoly of violence within both halves of the Dual Monarchy. The Common Army faced regular attempts by the Hungarian parliament to artificially increase Magyar language use, and increased autonomy for Magyar regiments, but these attempts were met with fierce resistance all the way up the chain of command to the Kaiser himself. The strong support for the

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<sup>96</sup> "ANNO - AustriaN Newspapers Online Historische österreichische Zeitungen Und Zeitschriften Online." ANNO. Accessed April 26, 2013. <http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=rpt&datum=19140729&zoom=33>

<sup>97</sup> I'm not necessarily a fan of the "home by Christmas" cliché, but in fact the article says that the soldiers were last seen saying "We'll see each other for Christmas!" "ANNO - AustriaN Newspapers Online Historische österreichische Zeitungen Und Zeitschriften Online." ANNO <http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=tpt&datum=19140729&zoom=33>

military and the widespread participation in the institution by all ethnicities indicates the belief in the military as a lasting and powerful institution.

The educated class would not have sought membership in the military if it did not offer social advancement and a stable career, and the lower classes would not have stayed in the military if it did not offer them a range of opportunities as well. These opportunities included the ability to learn a language that could facilitate easier access to an improved economic situation in German. If one were to view the Austro-Hungarian Empire prior to the First World War through a lens of decline and fall, then the notion that a multi-ethnic military would enjoy popular support throughout a heterogeneous state that was comprised of several different identities would not fit this mold. The support given to the military by the populace it was meant to defend challenges the straightforward notion of decline and fall, and reveals the depth and complexity surrounding the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy in 1918.



## Conclusion

The collapse of long lasting and powerful political states such as the Habsburg Empire provides an opportunity to explore key historiographic debates as questions concerning causes and consequences come to the fore. In order to understand how states or empires that lasted for hundreds of years can break apart or blink out of existence in a moment such as the First World War historians relied on the theory of decline and fall. Although its definition is prone to slight variations in general, decline and fall is a theory that nation states or empires reach a peak at some point in their existence, and thereafter they enter a phase of declining strength which culminates in their eventual dissolution or destruction. This peak period typically is determined by historians after the effect. The K.u.K Common Army, the greatest defender of the double monarchy's existence, played a pivotal role in the preservation and eventual destruction of the Habsburg state. The Common Army, faced with a heterogeneous ethnic landscape, and a shifting political landscape in addition to the general problems confronting the imperial powers of Europe at the turn of the century and a climate of imperial anxiety, responded in unique ways. The multitude of national movements that sought increasing autonomy threatened to tear the empire apart at the seams, and the Monarchy resisted these centrifugal movements through the strengthening of the combined armed forces of the Empire. The structure of the armed forces reflected not only the society from which they were derived, but also the strategies employed by the general staff and the Kaiser to create a more unified state.

Through the creation of reserve armies funded and staffed by the separate administrative halves of the empire, the *Landwehr* and *Honvéd* for the Austrian Empire

and the Kingdom of Hungary the armed forces navigated the precarious domestic political situation as the Hungarian administration sought increased autonomy from the Austrian portion. The enactment of empire wide conscription based upon the proportional population of the different nationalities was a strategy that ensured that not only did all nationalities participate in and have a stake in the Habsburg Empire, but it also enabled the Empire to administer an organization under its direct control that was a cross section of the state as a whole. A representative body such as the military proved a valuable laboratory for examining how the various nationalities interacted with one another, and for testing what the Monarchy could do to combat the centrifugal forces that created mixed and conflicting identities amongst the populace. The structure of the common army reflects the nature of understanding that the general staff and administrators of the empire held regarding the composition of their state. The structure was nuanced and flexible, able to incorporate multiple languages and ethnicities and still retain a somewhat streamlined chain of command. This intricate structure is entirely inconsistent with a generalized theory of decline and fall. It adds extra dimensions to the historical analysis of the Habsburg Empire prior to the First World War and demonstrates that clear attention to institutional developments alter our assessment of the period. Simply put, any attempt to argue that the empire was going through a predetermined period of decline is like trying to fit a square peg in a circular slot.

The Common Army brought multiple resources to bear against the various national movements threatening the unity of the empire. The military took advantage of existing sentiment amongst certain classes and groups, such as the prestige that individuals gained by becoming officers of the Habsburg armed forces. As militarism

crested among the European populaces prior to the outbreak of war in 1914 it was deemed a very prestigious career track to become an officer, and to a lesser extent to serve as an enlisted man in the military. The military understood the ability it had to grant prestige to individuals and removed barriers to entry by enabling recipients of the *abitur* to serve a voluntary year as an officer in the Common Army, and then serve time as reserve officers. Kaiser Franz Josef's immense popularity also bolstered the efforts of the military. Franz Josef was immensely popular throughout the Monarchy and nationalistic groups that fought for autonomy remained openly in favor of Franz Josef, and his retention as their leader. The Kaiser himself felt extremely close to his military, and exerted nothing less than his full power as Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary to preserve it as an armed force to defend the Empire from outside threats, and to preserve it from internal ones as well. The Kaiser maintained the tradition of military service for male members of the Habsburg family, and long after he had ceased to command forces directly in the military he continued to wear a military uniform, tying the existence of his line to the existence of the military. The dynasty and the army had a symbiotic relationship. Through modernized training and the expansion of cadet academics the military created an armed force that although slower than some of its western rivals, was modernizing and proved capable of producing top of the line equipment, such as the massive Skoda trench mortars used by the Empire during the First World War. The competence and modernization of the common army at the turn of the century is problematic for proponents of decline and fall. The military of the Habsburg state should not have proven effective at holding together these various ethnicities and forming a cohesive fighting force if their defeat was inevitable. Additionally, the vitality of both the

foreign diplomacy of the monarchy and the proactive plans by the general staff to engage in preemptive strikes on nation states further degrades any claim that the Austro-Hungarian Empire was decaying from within.

Public opinion regarding the military in prewar Austria-Hungary is an integral part of the narrative regarding the end of the Habsburg state. The multitude of nationalities within the empire created a situation where the possibility existed for some ethnicities to support the military more than others. Alternatively the administrations of the two halves of the empire could have intentionally left certain ethnicities disenfranchised, which would have created deeper conflicts and tensions within the state. Instead the public generally had a positive view of the military, which the Kaiser viewed as the best defense of his monarchy. The views of the Kaiser and the military were intertwined, and their positive reputations drew off of each other, to increase their support significantly. The proportional conscription from all groups within the empire ensured that every group had a stake in the existence of the state, and this encouraged support of the common army. Because the military had widespread support across ethnic groups, it is highly unlikely that without a defeat at the hands of the allies in World War I that the Empire would have disintegrated along national lines any time soon. Once again, a more in depth study of the military and its position within the Habsburg state reveals that the theory of decline and fall simply fails to navigate the nuances of the specific situation facing the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the years leading up to its dissolution.

Undoubtedly the theory of decline and fall is a popular one. It represents an easy way to understand how long lasting and powerful states can collapse. Variations of the theory have been applied to the Roman Empire, the Russian Empire, the Ottoman

Empire, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire among others. Decline and fall fails at every turn to represent an appropriate picture of the collapse of nation states and empires. In the case of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which operated under various names but lasted for roughly 400 years, decline and fall is an oversimplified attempt at understanding how this central European superpower at last dissolved. An in-depth case study of the institutions that allowed these states to persist, such as the K.u.K Common Army, clearly reveals the inadequacies of the decline theory. In this case, decline theories are insufficient rubrics, and their use as an external lens imposed on history is entirely inappropriate for understanding how the Habsburg state collapsed. An inside out view is required for understanding the nuances at hand in the complex matter of collapsed or dissolved states. An inside out view is one that examines the internal political situation, pressures, institutions, and popular sentiments regarding the state, as opposed to imposing a fixed external lens such as decline and fall upon the disintegration of political entities.

While this study of the K.u.K Common Army is effective in examining the inability of decline and fall to explain the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire there are other research agendas that in the future might prove even more revealing. An in depth examination of the bureaucracies of the Austrian Empire and the Hungarian Kingdom would serve as a different angle from which to explore the meaningfulness of the military as an institution. The Austro-Hungarian Empire possessed one of the most sophisticated bureaucracies at the turn of the century and undoubtedly a review of the intentions and wielding of bureaucratic power by the state would prove revealing. Alternatively, a comparative analysis of the three heterogeneous empires that all fell during or after the First World War, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire,

and the Russian Empire would provide an extra dimension of understanding.<sup>98</sup> All of these entities existed for hundreds of years, and collapsed within a heartbeat of one another, and a study of these empires and the First World War could provide a new basis for assessing theories of decline. Finally, an examination of the personalities that led, created, and molded the Austro-Hungarian state could prove effective in examining the circumstances surrounding the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Leaders such as Franz Josef and Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf played critical roles in the persistence of the state, and biographic studies of these men from within a historical framework could prove extremely worthwhile. While this study has provided convincing evidence that the theory of decline and fall is insufficient in explaining the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire through the use of the Habsburg military apparatus as a lens it has raised many more questions. It is this historian's opinion that further study in the matter of the dissolution of the Habsburg state is required, especially in Anglo-American scholarship which is extremely lacking on the subject. This is especially critical as investigating the collapse of a powerful western heterogeneous society such as Austria-Hungary might prove a useful basis for understanding contemporary entities such as the European Union. Only through a comprehensive understanding of the history regarding the last massive heterogeneous political entity in this region can policies be developed to properly structure the next political entity for the benefit of all of its citizens.

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<sup>98</sup>Reynolds, Michael A. *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Decline faces more critics now than ever before, but persists as a seemingly credible theory. A more in depth study of empires such as the Ottoman and Russian are valuable in understanding its inaccuracies.



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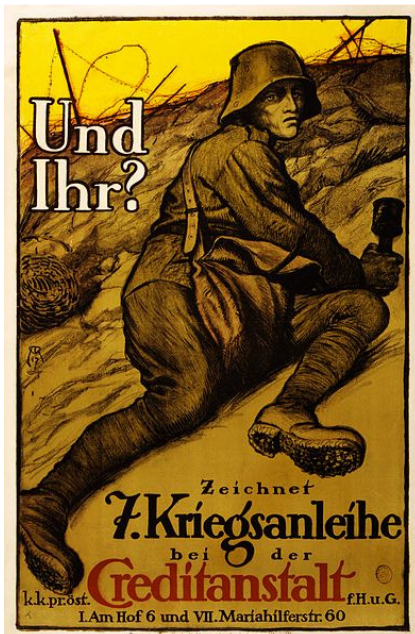
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## Visual Archive



Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pietzner, Carl \(1853-1927\) - Emperor Franz Josef I - ca 1885.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pietzner,_Carl_(1853-1927)_-_Emperor_Franz_Josef_I_-_ca_1885.jpg) This image is public domain.

Description: Kaiser Franz Josef, leader of Austria from 1848-1867, and then the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1867-1916( died of natural causes in Vienna). He is seen here in his military style uniform, which he regularly wore. He was massively influential on the military, and was the commander and chief of all Austro-Hungarian military forces.



Source:

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Und\\_Ihr\\_Zichnet\\_7\\_Kriegsanleihe\\_Crisco\\_restoration\\_and\\_colours.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Und_Ihr_Zichnet_7_Kriegsanleihe_Crisco_restoration_and_colours.jpg). This image is public domain.

Description: This poster is for the 7<sup>th</sup> war bond drive in Austria. The use of yellow and black as the main colors are meant to represent the colors of the house of Habsburg, something that is worth noting. Propaganda during the First World War rose to a new level, and posters such as this were a part of that rise. An Austro-Hungarian soldier is seen here, grenade in hand, turning and looking behind, with “And You?” written in German appearing to his left.



Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dissolution\\_of\\_Austria-Hungary.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dissolution_of_Austria-Hungary.png) I did not create or own the rights to this work. It is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/) license. All credit goes to the holder of the license P.S. Burton.

Description: This map shows the territory of Austria-Hungary before and after the First World War. The red lettered words are the nations and their borders following the end of the war. This is useful in understanding how many nation states were created from Austro-Hungarian territory after its dissolution. Additionally portions of the empire were given to existing nation states that had formed ethnic minorities in the empire, such as

Serbia, Romania, and Italy. Poland also gained independence, and absorbed the Austro-Hungarian portion of Poland.